



February 10, 2016

Testimony for Appropriations Conservation & Development – DEEP – State Parks

Dear Senator Bye, Representative Walker and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the Friends of Connecticut State Parks (FCSP) to express our concern regarding the Budget Cuts proposed by Governor Malloy. FCSP represents 23 individual volunteer State Park Friends groups and their 6000+ membership statewide.

We are very concerned about the continued chipping away of the already paltry State Parks budget. Connecticut's parks have been operating at only "Core responsibilities" for the past several years. There is virtually nothing left to cut without severely impacting the daily operation of the parks. Already, vacancies due to retirements have gone unfilled. There are many more retirements looming on the horizon which will leave the parks and forests woefully understaffed and limited experienced staff to train and supervise seasonal employees. The seasonal employees have been taking on more of the responsibilities of full-time staff during the peak recreational season. With the impending cuts, it is likely that there will be far fewer seasonal staff hired this next summer. With limited full-time staff and fewer seasonal staff, the parks and forests cannot be as well-run nor as well maintained as they once were. The worst case scenario is that facilities may have to be mothballed. The result will be fewer visits and ultimately a negative impact on the bottom line – the money that is returned to the General Fund.

The Friends Groups across the state contribute thousands of hours of service annually at no cost to the state. Increasingly, the volunteers are being asked to take on tasks once done by park and forest full time and seasonal employees. Trails maintenance, painting buildings, trimming trees, training garden staff have increasingly fallen to volunteers. While Friends volunteers do not mind helping out occasionally, the dependence on age 65+ volunteers to do basic level maintenance is untenable and volunteers are becoming more frustrated and discouraged.

The Friends of Connecticut State Parks understand that the budget situation in Connecticut is "difficult" to say the least. We would ask that members of your committee do whatever you can to protect the resources of the State Park Division and keep the parks and forests as attracting and inviting places for all of Connecticut's residents and visitors to enjoy.

Respectfully,  
Pamela Aey Adams  
President, FCSP